

OCCUPATIONAL NOISE - HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

1. Purpose. This document establishes procedures to protect personnel from harmful effects of noise at work.
2. Applicability. This procedure is applicable to all CENWP elements.
3. References.
 - a. Title 29, CFR Part 1910.95, Occupational Noise Exposure.
 - b. AR 40-5, Preventive Medicine, paragraph 5-16, Hearing Conservation.
 - c. AR 385-30, Safety Color Code Markings and Signs.
 - d. ER 385-1-89, Hearing Conservation Program.
 - e. TB MED 501, Hearing Conservation.
4. Training. All personnel included in the hearing conservation program will receive training on an annual basis.
5. Prevention. The prevention of hearing loss from exposure to noise involves a coordinated application of engineering control, personnel protective equipment, and medical control measures; supplemented by health, education, supervision, and training of personnel. Initiation of a program is required in all areas where the noise exposure currently is at or in excess of 85 dB(A).
 - a. One of the following solutions can be used to control noise problems.
 - (1) Elimination or reduction of a noise at its source (such as bolting down loose covers).
 - (2) Isolation of the source (such as enclosing a machine with a sound absorbing material).
 - (3) Vibration isolation; e.g., shock mounts.
 - (4) Absorption of direct noise (by using acoustical materials on walls and ceilings).
 - (5) Personal protection by using earplugs or muffs. (Personal protection devices are only recommended when engineering or administrative controls are not possible).
 - b. Protection may consist of earplugs or earmuffs, whichever device will be worn consistently by the exposed individuals.
 - (1) Earmuffs or individually fitted ear plugs will be furnished employees and the use enforced on noise level exposure above 85 dB(A).
 - (2) Both plugs and muffs will be available and worn for exposures above 108 dB(A).
 - c. A warning sign will be conspicuously placed at the entrance to areas where sound levels exceed 85 dB(A).
 - d. When an individual machine or piece of equipment exceeds a noise level of 85 dB(A), a sign, label, or decal will be placed on or near the machine to warn of high noise exposure and that hearing protection is required while machine or piece of equipment is operating.
6. Inclusion Criterion. All employees who routinely work with noise hazardous equipment or in a noise-hazardous area must be included in the hearing conservation program.
7. Audiometric Tests. Personnel in the hearing conservation program will be provided audiometric tests, given a formal orientation in the prevention of hearing loss, and will be required to wear hearing protectors.
 - a. In situations where employees are infrequently exposed to hazardous noise for short durations (such as walk-through noise areas), audiometric testing and formal training may not be practical or necessary.
 - (1) Exposures of 15 minutes in any 24-hour period to hazardous noise of 85-101 dB(A) will not require audiometric testing or formal training, but the use of hearing protectors is still mandatory

(2) Judgments concerning the exclusion from audiometric testing and training will only be made by the SOHO.

b. A baseline audiogram will be initiated for personnel who are routinely exposed to noise in excess of 85 dB(A) within six months of an employee's first exposure. Thereafter, an annual audiogram is required.

(1) The yearly evaluations will be made by comparing the current versus the previous audiogram, taking into account differences for aging. When significant hearing loss has been determined, appropriate action must be taken as prescribed in para 8c.

(2) These audiograms will be obtained in conjunction with the medical examinations required by the Safety and Occupational Health Program.

c. If an audiogram indicates a significant threshold shift (STS), the personnel will be retested as soon as possible after a 14-hour period away from work place noise, but within 30 days. The purpose of the retest is to determine if the threshold shift is temporary. If a retest indicates that an STS exists, the results of the retest will be considered the annual audiogram and will be substituted as the employee's new base line. If a retest does indicate that an STS still exists, the employee will be sent to an audiologist or otolaryngologists for a clinical audiological evaluation at the Government's expense.

8. Caution Signs for Noise Hazardous Areas.

a. Signs will be posted at entrances to or on the periphery of all well defined work areas in which employees could be exposed to hazardous noise.

b. Warning signs will clearly indicate that the area is a high noise area and shall indicate that hearing protection is required.

c. Signs will be in accordance with AR 385-30, Safety Color Code Marking and Signs.

d. Each tool or piece of equipment which produces A-weighted sound pressure levels of 85 dB or greater will be marked conspicuously to alert personnel, except in those cases where an entire space is designated as a noise hazardous area.